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Maximizing Positive User Experience at a career-coaching program in Sweden

A focus on the perspective of Universal Design

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Abstract

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Universal Design is a design principle that has been in recent years gaining growing prevalence in the design of physical and social environments and product innovation. Universal Design is referred to as the process of creating products, services, and environments for people with a wide range of (dis)abilities and other characteristics, without special adaptation ‘to the greatest extent possible. The principle also has the ambitious goal to include ‘everyone’ by considering different parameters and conditions in life. Despite the ambitious and idealistic design underpinning, how could we use Universal Design contextually to promote a positive user experience? What does it mean when ‘disability’ – a way of categorizing and evaluating abilities, changes given a different context?

This thesis aims to discuss and elaborate approaches to maximizing the positive user experience of participants in a career coaching program. The first objective is to study how Universal Design can be applied more generally to improve users’ participation and experience. In this study, the career coaching program is a public service available to unemployed persons and job seekers in Sweden. The second objective is to make use of this case example to expand the ideas of Universal Design as a whole with the help of anthropological and sociological theories.

With data collection carried out in two and a half months, a mix of ethnographic methods, such as autoethnography, semi-structured interviews, casual chats, and netnography, are used to inform the analysis.

Keywords: Universal Design; User Experience; Equality; Equitable access; Inclusion; Career; Career-coaching; Ethnography

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

‘In a perfect world, nobody would be excluded by design, and there would be no need for Universal Design. However, since this is not the case, it is important to see what Universal Design signifies, how it is understood and what implications it can have (...).’

Hansson, 2006, p. 23

In September 2019, we just started our first course in this master’s program in Applied Cultural Analysis. Our first research client told us in a meeting that after we learned about what Universal Design is, we will learn to see how it could be applied in many different settings. It could also change the way we see our surrounding environment quite drastically.

Now onto my last semester in this master’s study, I found myself still deeply intrigued by this design principle. After writing two previous research assignments on inclusion and exclusion, I can’t help but notice how essential and fitting it is to bring Universal Design into the discussion. This study is based on how the experience has been for a specific group of users on the receiving end of a career-coaching program under Arbetsförmedlingen (the Swedish Public Employment Service).

This group of users reminded me of those who have limited mobility and are restricted by their socio-physical environment in everyday life. They are often categorized as being ‘disabled’ or being called ‘*the disabled*.’ Wheelchair users, or those with visual or hearing impairments, etc., are often the receivers of such labels because they deal with a more ‘visible’ disability when interacting with their surrounding environment.

However, as the word ‘disability’ suggests, disability, be it a physical or mental condition, could be seen as a disadvantage that could limit one’s movements, senses, or activities. Such disadvantages often relate to how they interact or react to the design of these

man-made artifacts and how these designs constitute a part of their reality with constraints that inhibit and shape their level of well-being and independence (Imrie and Luck, 2014, p. 1315).

As Imrie and Luck (2014) put it, the result from the inflexible and pre-determined fixtures is that these individuals become unable to function without the help of others. In this regard, their ‘disability’ is, in fact, on the receiving end of the constraints imposed by ‘sets of humanly imposed attributes’ (Hansson, 2006, p. 8) encompassed by man-made products, ranging from the conventional tangible products like utensils and tools to more intangible products and services like communication and transportation systems, and the built environments. Values become ingrained into objects and facilities that had blended into our everyday life. These design artifacts will not be noticeable in the eye of a normalized ‘abled’ body who does not struggle with the inflexibility they experience because of the physical environment.

◆ *Universal Design and further studies*

In recent years, there has been advocacy to imagine Universal Design (in short: UD) as a humanitarian concept that could benefit a wide range of users. The primary aim is to provide products and environments usable by all people, to the greatest possible without the need for special adaptations (National Disability Authority, n.d.).

UD has been traditionally delimited within studies in the fields of disability and rehabilitative engineering. But in recent years, it has received more attention in urban studies and the field of education. More researchers and companies started juxtaposing the design principle with other inclusive, positively connotated, and progressive movements, such as being *learners-friendly*, *age-friendly*. The concept is also applicable in helping to build an inclusive, diverse and equal environment in the workplace for everyone.

However, many questions still remain on how well the concept of UD could apply to products and services, which could enable further discussion beyond the scope of accessibility and assistive technology. In Persson et al. (2015), it has been emphasized that UD requires further scrutiny to make a more ‘user sensitive’ and accommodative environment and services for a greater amount of people despite visible or invisible special needs (p. 509).

1.2 Enter cultural analysis and the career-coaching program (the field)

In this master's program, we as students in ethnography and anthropology have been introduced to 'cultural analysis', which is not often easy to be explained to people outside of the program what the term implies, what it does, and how it could be applied.

In my understanding, cultural analysis employs traditional research methods and approaches used in ethnography, with a combination of knowledge and theories developed by cultural scientists and philosophers to produce knowledge and create new insights. The situated knowledge(s) are informed and made possible through using ethnography as a discipline and a methodological research tool, alongside theories as the analytical framework.

Combining the two frames together provides a different angle into seeing something conventional and even 'old' with new light. Therefore, within the two years' studies, the practical and hands-on aspects of the consultancy projects we have done enabled us to apply the knowledge we acquired into practice. These projects are informed by both quantitative and qualitative methods, which allows a more comprehensive angle to study a research topic.

In ethnographic term, the 'field' refers to the 'place' where ethnography usually happen (Ehn et al., 2016). Not limited to the discipline of ethnography, the 'place' is the 'fieldsite' where fieldwork takes place, such as the gathering of observation, interviews, and other sorts of methods to collect the opinions of different individuals and their points of view. Through researching different people's perspectives, cultural analysis makes possible a more nuanced, complete, and fair investigation, making use of theoretical frameworks informed by sociologists, philosophers, and anthropologists.

In this study, my research interest lies in Universal Design, and my 'field' will be the career-coaching service that is offered to registered jobseekers under the Swedish Unemployment Agency. Their service mainly involves helping unemployed persons find jobs and matching them with potential employers. Another core component of their service is to provide workshops for job searchers and offer them advice and tips on job-searching and information on the labor market in Sweden.

1.3 Research Gap

The notion of Universal Design consists of seven principles (see, section 2.1) which could be used as guidelines to evaluate designs, emphasizing both the possibility and importance of providing more usable products and environments for a broader range of consumers (National Disability Authority, n.d.).

It appears that up until now, there has not been an adequate amount of interdisciplinary study thus far on studying Universal Design through the lens of cultural analysis. In particular, cultural theories enable further interpretations and discussions of Universal Design through real-life case examples.

It has been common for Universal Design to be used as a perspective on inclusive city or education topics. However, the concept remains to be a fairly rigid set of guidelines and becomes a more static set of quantitative tools to guide existing design.

In the face of this observable trend, UD, as I argue, becomes more and more decontextualized when being applied. There is a need to examine what the theoretical traditions in UD mean and continue reimagining its applications to move towards the goal of reaching a wider range of users without special adaptations much as possible.

1.4 Aims and research questions

Universal Design is the design principle used in different fields as guidelines to evaluate the level of accessibility and inclusive design to various users. But what do accessibility and inclusiveness mean when ‘disability’, a way of categorizing and assessing abilities, changes according to context? How could we use Universal Design contextually to maximize user experience?

In this study, one of the two objectives of this thesis is to apply Universal Design principles to understand participants' experiences in a career-coaching program. This program is a public service that is available to unemployed persons and job seekers in Sweden. The second objective is to use the career-coaching program as a case example to reflect on and expand the concept of Universal Design beyond its seven principles, using anthropological and sociological theories.

Both objectives work towards the aim of maximizing a positive user experience. The first objective mentioned above will discuss how Universal Design can be applied more generally to improve users' participation and experience. Meanwhile, the second objective works towards the aim of enriching the ideas of Universal Design as a whole.

The following research questions have been formulated to close in on achieving the aim mentioned above.

- ❖ In what ways is career coaching carried out in the program? How does the arrangement reflect its target users and non-users?
- ❖ How is the program experienced by participants? Regarding the non-users of the program, what hinders their participation?
- ❖ In what ways does Universal Design bring forward another perspective to see the participants and the career-coaching service and maximize positive user experience?

1.5 Ethical Considerations

This project is a collection of experiences, perspectives, and insights from myself as an insider/outsider working in and around the career-coaching program. I will further discuss Chapter 5: Understanding the field and from my informants in this study.

Despite receiving approval from the company to carry out my thesis there, the company, which is a job-matching and career-coaching company in Sweden, will remain anonymous in the study. All the informants in the study remain anonymous, and when needed, they are referred to using a randomly assigned initially. This is to avoid using a pseudonym, which could be coincidentally the same with the name of a coach or a client.

All the interviewees are aware that the interviews are conducted for research purposes for my master's thesis on 'career coaching and what could be done to maximize clients' positive experiences. They are all aware that the quotes from them during the interviews might be used and referred to anonymously in this thesis project. Informants who participated in a recorded session were aware that the purpose of recording is for transcription and analyzing purposes.

Once the project is completed, all materials collected in the form of audio recordings and transcribed data will be deleted. For informants who are not comfortable with being recorded yet are still willing to be interviewed, they are participating in merely a 'casual chat'. I will note down remarks and insights immediately after the phone call. All interviews and chats are conducted online except for one face-to-face meeting.

To achieve anonymity, I have also purposely chosen not to publish my position as an interpreter on an online networking site like LinkedIn and keep my connections there private to avoid exposing the name of the career-coaching company.

The following terms are used to refer to different subjects in the study for better clarification:

Informant(s)	A general term referring to the participants in the study.
Participants	Participants in the career-coaching program.
The company	The career-coaching service provider.
Coach(es)	The career coaches in the company for which I have interpreted for.

As a note, most of the clients I have contacts with are mainly Cantonese-speaking Swedish immigrants who are in need of interpreting services. Access to my informants has been limited during my work as an interpreter online/via phone due to COVID-19. In this way, my ethical consideration is that analysis is predominantly informed through interactions and interviews with informants who mainly have a specific language and ethnic background.

Yet, given that this group of informants might represent a *population* different from the usual participants under the career-coaching program who are Swedish speaking, this could be a unique group of participants to research about.

1.6 Disposition

I will outline here the contents to be covered in this thesis.

In the next chapter, Chapter 2: Literature Review, we will delve into an in-depth discussion of Universal Design, including its underlying rationale, what the design principle encompasses, and discussions around it when placed in dialogue with other often considered ‘synonymous’ design principles.

In Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework, I attempt to explore the philosophical underpinnings related to Universal Design. This is an attempt from a cultural analytical perspective to explore the relations and intricateness between philosophical concepts, cultural theories, and Universal Design.

In Chapter 4: Methodology, I will discuss the methods used in this thesis, including the rationales behind the chosen approaches, as well as special considerations while approaching the field and writing about it.

In Chapter 5: Analysis: Understanding the field, fieldwork materials will be incorporated to inform the analysis using a bricolage approach. This part of the analysis primarily focuses on the career-coaching company with the aids of cultural theories to deepen the discussion. In this section, I wish to answer the first two sets of research questions on understanding the career-coaching program, including the program's structure and how participants were experiencing the coaching.

In Chapter 6: Analysis: Applying Universal Design, the focus will be switched to using Universal Design as a perspective and a tool to analyze and evaluate the career-coaching services offered to job seekers.

In Chapter 7: Analysis: Place-making in the program, the discussion will reflect the principles of Universal Design with the aids of the angle of ‘placemaking’, using cultural theories such as liminality, the space triad, and anthropology on ‘hope’.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Previous research related to both Universal Design and user experience will be discussed for a more comprehensive review in this section. Through the first half of this section, the discussion will be based on how Universal Design gets started and what distinguishes it from accessible design. Accessible design, sometimes referred to as ‘barrier-free design’, targets making everyday objects and built environment usable and convenient for everyone in society (Persson et al., 2014, p. 5).

2.1 The term Universal Design and its seven principles

Universal Design was coined by Ronald Mace, the late architect who also found the Centre for Universal Design in the 1980s. He noticed that features, such as sloped curbs intended for people with disabilities, have benefited some other groups of users, such as bikers and people who use a stroller (Centre for an Accessible Society, n.d., para. 4). The National Disability Authority in Ireland, the official statement has ascribed the positive social changes in recognizing the needs of those who survived an injury and illness after medical advancement ‘concerning civil and human rights’ (National Disability Authority, n.d. para. 1).

The seven principles are (1) equitable use, (2) flexibility in use, (3) simple and intuitive use, (4) perceptible information, (5) tolerance for error, (6) low physical effort, and (7) size and space for approach and use (National Disability Authority, n.d., para. 2).

2.2 Advocacy on respecting disability rights

The Second World War has been cited as a partial yet crucial reason for developing and observing a ‘softening’ attitude on policies towards the injured soldiers and civilians in some Western countries (Barnes, 2011). As Barnes (2011) explains, this has resulted from a ‘moral obligation’ felt by politicians and the public towards a large population of civilians and military personnel who have been affected during the war, on top of elderly people and the existing disabled population (p.56). Barnes also cited that societal response to chronic conditions or illnesses was time, location, and culturally specific (p.56).

There have been extensive studies illustrating how people with disabilities or specific needs are often neglected in urban studies. It has been particularly evident in the planning of physical access of buildings. Many buildings are designed exclusively for people completely ‘devoid of impairment’ (Barnes, 2011, p. 57). The goal to create accessible

environment for all has been set to be achieved in 2010 in Sweden (Persson et al.). However, from my own ethnographic fieldwork collected during my work placement at Certec, it is quite evident that the problem of accessibility often still remains. There remains a need for greater attentiveness and dedication would have to be put further on observing how the facilities are used.

If we brought back the discussion to twenty years ago, which is about ten years after Ronald Mace has coined the term Universal Design, accessible design is still not, in fact, always available in the built environment. From the autoethnographic written by Susan Wendell, in her publication 'The rejected body: Feminist Philosophical Reflections on Disability' below, she has eloquently captured the 'problem' that built environment has been only imagined to be used by specific groups of people in the society, which echoes to what Barnes (2011) mentioned above, the intended users being the people who are 'devoid of impairment' (p. 57).

'It took me several years of struggling with the heavy door to my building, sometimes having to wait until a person stronger came along, to realize that the door was an accessibility problem, not only for me but for others as well. And I did not notice, until one of my students pointed it out, that the lack of signs that could be read from a distance at my university forced people with mobility impairments to expend a lot of energy unnecessarily, searching for rooms and offices. (...) I interpreted it, automatically, as a problem arising from my illness (as I did with the door), rather than as a problem arising from the built environment having been created for too narrow a range of people and situations.'

Wendell, 1996, p. 46

In recent years, there has been greater advocacy in Sweden to advocate equal accessibility rights for those who are disabled by the social and physical environment, such as various efforts to provide them with more accessibility support. Yet, there are still plenty of buildings being restricted by other colliding laws on preserving heritage, limiting the possibility of adding changes to the old buildings' façades and adapting them with accessibility support.

In an interview with an accessibility advisor and Ph.D. candidate researching Universal Design, she has explained the story behind all the removed accessibility buttons once

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installed at different shops around Lund and why they were no longer in place. These photos below have been taken at numerous shop fronts near Lund Central Station.



I. Added accessibility support with only an empty button case at numerous shop fronts near Lund Central Station. Photos were taken on September 17 and 20, 2020 and 21 January 2021, respectively.

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' (...) In Lund, I was told the story about the signs, because the one who had the job before me, at the special planning department, he and the other staff in the department had to talk to private shops, because even if they are privately owned, they have the responsibility still, to adapt the facilities so people can be able to get inside. But it's a question of, it's a law, but you can ... there are possibilities for you to get around it. Because it's only said that I shouldn't be too heavy an economic burden for the shop owners, for instance. Also, all the measures should be taken, if it is possible. And of course, there are people who would say that everything is impossible, even though there are always solutions to everything. So, one of the solutions for all these old houses with no obvious possibility to change the whole entrance or install lifts also, they proposed the solutions to the shops that, at least you can have a button (...).'

'Personally, I don't like that kind of solutions because we have also signed the new conventions on rights of people with disability. I mean, the whole convention is built upon human rights, and those with disability have the same human rights as everyone else, so you have the right to be independent, (...) There are always other situations, of course, when help in different ways is needed anyhow, but it is said in Universal Design, the main solution, is always for everyone, and

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you can, in some cases, you can also add technical aids and assistive services and so on, especially for some people. But anyhow, they made these solutions for these signs and doorbells, and I think it worked, for a couple of years, but no one is responsible for these really, because it's a network of people inside the city who made the proposal to the shop owners, and the shop owners they didn't pay anything for these, they just say, 'yeah, thank you. We get this 'assignment' button, thank you very much.' And in the city administration, it's no one's responsibility to follow this thing up. So, after some years, it's forgotten, and the bells are (not working anymore...)'.

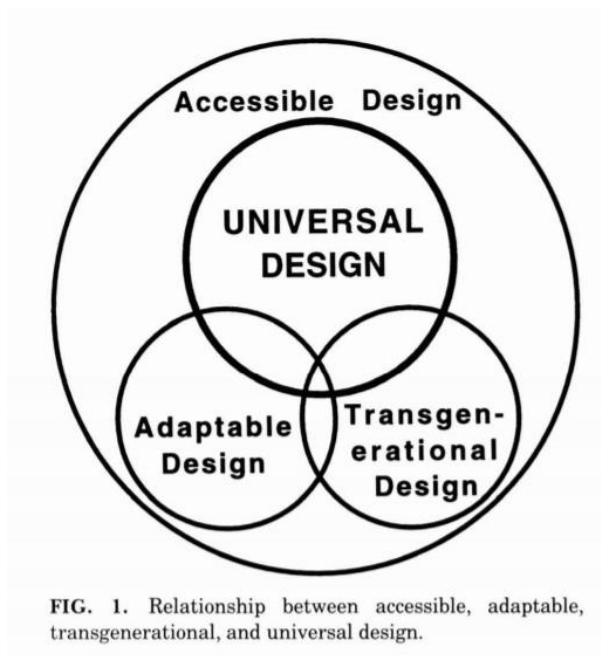
Interview with accessibility advisor, 7 May 2021

The above real-life examples and evidence taken during this thesis and the work placement at Certec had demonstrated that Universal Design, with its roots in advocating equal rights for those with disabilities, is still not considered a commonplace practice everywhere within Sweden.

2.3 Elucidating the terminologies of different design principles

Moving forward, we would focus within this section on the various design principles which are similar but not synonymous in their meaning with Universal Design.

In an article published by Follette Story (1998), she has denoted the differences and relationships between accessible, adaptable, transgenerational, and universal design using a Venn Diagram. According to her, universal design could be transgenerational and adaptable but ‘always accessible’ (p. 5). However, not every accessible design is universal, meaning that some users may still be excluded, such as a lack of consideration and/or accommodation to gender difference, cultural and ethnic background, as well as literacy level (Follette Story, 1998, p. 5).



II. Venn diagram used by Follette Story on illustrating the nuances amongst different design principles (Follette Story, 1998, p. 5)

In this way, Universal Design differentiates itself from accessible design as the goal is to consider all types of human variation and accessibility. Such ‘goal’ has been elaborated and clarified further in Steinfeld & Maisel (2012) and enriched into eight different goals. Each principle often interweaves with another as cross-work on improving a goal/goals, including the improvement on one’s performance, health, and social participation.

Regarding all these nomenclatures of different design principles, a central discussion remains upon how Universal Design distinguishes itself from all these other terminologies and what it signifies. Therefore, the remaining half of the discussion will be situated on understanding what Universal Design means, implies, and signifies, guided by an epistemological approach.

2.4 The confusions within and around Universal Design

It has been commonly considered that Universal Design is now used in recent research with the term ‘design for all’ (Persson et al., 2014, p. 5; Iwarsson et Ståhl, 2003, p. 62). Often considered similar in meaning with inclusive design, the two encompass a different level of commitment to social participation and the notion of design for ‘everyone’ in society. In Persson et al. (2014), inclusive design refers to designs that are to accommodate and become accessible to as many people as ‘reasonably possible’ on a global level, ‘in a wide variety of situations and to the greatest extent possible’ without specialized adaptation (p. 6). As skillfully noted in Persson et al. (2014)’s discussion on the different design concepts and what they imply, the key is that ‘reasonably possible’ allows tolerance in a sense that it justifies disregarding the needs of some groups of users if it is considered too difficult or costly to achieve such accommodations (p. 6).

➤ *On being a design for ‘everyone’*

Particularly because Universal Design is rooted in accessibility and how it faces ongoing difficulties to how different people in the society, such as urban planners, architects, and even scholars, interpret what it means, UD reflects a philosophical dilemma. More precisely, it pushes the thinking that aiming towards accessibility is not enough and adequate to achieve real inclusion beyond the scope of *just* accessibility. It reflects the difficulty of balancing between a philosophical and ethical ideal to a political one regarding everyone in the literal sense. Very often, one’s identities and social labels, when layered and overlapped, could influence one’s sense of belonging (pp. 19-20). This accentuates the difficulty when it comes to creating a design for ‘everyone’ in society.

➤ *Is it too utopian?*

As Kawauchi (2010) explained in his work, barrier-free for one group of users (typically referring to removing obstacles and guaranteeing physical access for people with disabilities) does not mean that it is also, in a social sense, ‘barrier-free’ for another group. For instance, there has been a rise of ‘hostile design in recent years in public facilities, which shows potentially hostile attitudes towards the homeless. Therefore, a taxonomy of social hierarchy could also influence the way ‘everyone’ gains access or not to a particular service or facilities. With the ambitious aim to include ‘everyone’ as a philosophical ground, Universal Design is in and of itself an elusive and a rather ‘utopian’ concept while getting tried to be applied in actuality (Mace et al., as cited in Gossett, 2009, p. 447).

For the reason that Universal Design is gaining wider attention and popularity in usage amongst organizations on the agenda of inclusion and diversity, Ericsson et al. (2020) published an analysis on how ‘everyone’ is framed and described in different publications. In a concluding remark, Ericsson et al. (2012) advised that when writing about Universal Design, special attention should be made to creating narratives of ‘difference’ instead of ‘deviance’, as well as identifying relevant categorizations which have been essential but absent from discussion (pp. 16-17).

‘Language has played, and continues to play, a major role in the development of universal design. Words have the power to define, categorise and construct meaning. One person assigns a name to something, others learn the name, continue to use it, and through tacit agreement a common understanding of the meaning is established’.

(Bringolf, 2008, p. 45)

In Norman (1998), the work of Stevansson has been cited as a source of discussion for emotivism, including the connection between the meaning of a word and its use (p. 164). In simpler terms, the ‘meaning’ of a word is not the same as its ‘use’, for the use of a word could be dynamic in relation to a particular emotion, intention, as well as attitude that become attached to a word (pp. 164- 165).

Chapter 3: Theoretical framework

Moving on to the next chapter, we would continue to break down Universal Design through a post-structuralist perspective to deconstruct the term and explore what it signifies. The goal is that through the theoretical discussions, it will help guide the analysis on Chapter 4, which is on ‘understanding the (ethnographic) field’.

3.1 Thinking about *disability*

Universal Design has first been brought to light since philosophical thinkers and scholars found phenomenological evidence on how barrier-free design and accessibility design traditionally considers those with ‘disability’ – usually referring to those who struggle with physical access to socio-physical environments as the *other*. Arguably what distinguishes accessible and barrier-free design most from Universal Design is the way they see and categorize varying human conditions and abilities.

Under accessible and barrier-free design, removing barriers and supplementing affected bodies with assisting tools and technologies are somewhat time-specific and/or cultural-specific accommodations. It means that those needs are not prioritized or even considered typical users in the first place buildings, facilities and services are designed. This leads to separation and segregation as specific buildings or environments are created to cater to their needs.

In Iwarsson et Ståhl (2003), it has been described that the ‘underlying principle’ of accessible design is that there have been two different kinds of populations, namely the ‘normal’ population and the population which diverges from ‘normality’ (pp. 60-61). As I contend, the way to how the proposition is articulated might be a bit misleading: Accessible design could be explained to be a response of design principle towards improving the quality of life and fundamental accessibility support for those with usually physical or cognitive impairments. Therefore, it could be said that accessible design recognizes how there are two different types of users that are manifested through the design artifact. For instance, accessible access might still be provided upon special request or through another set of standards or procedures.

3.2 Manifesting spatial practices through designs

In theory, relating to Henri Lefebvre's space triad of the perceived-conceived-lived space, how urban planners, architects, and institutions perceive disability and normality are then conceived into what became the outcome of the built environments, products, and services. In and of itself, space is a (social) product.

According to the Lefebvre (1991) theory on spatial practice, the customs of spatial practice could manifest themselves through how imagined space is materialized in the design of the place. The people who imagine the space, communicate in subtleness through the designs of the space the targeted user and the kind of user it is to be excluded.

Meanwhile, the 'perceived' space by those who imagine the space could differ from the 'lived space' in reality (Stanek, 2011, pp. 130- 131). This could also be one of the crucial reasons why sometimes institutions and companies are not aware of a certain 'problem'. They could have imagined that a foreseeable 'problem' has already been thought through and taken care of by having a 'special' measure.

However, the 'lived' space, i.e., some users' lived experience, could still be neglected and not be followed up after the 'launching' of a service or a product.

As mentioned above, within the design process of the 'service' or 'product'/'environment' in question, it communicates the power dynamic between institutions and the users. The representations of the space might not become how space is lived in reality by the intended users, i.e., the spaces of representation, without any distortion.

As Lefebvre explains, the perceived-conceived-lived trial will 'lose all its force if it is treated as an abstract model' (Stanek, 2011, p. 132). Therefore, in this regard, more about the social production of space would be used contextually in the analysis section of this thesis. Yet, as I contend, it is crucial to bring forth the theory to clarify how these spatial practices become the discernible indicator of the 'regulars of everyday life' (Lefebvre, as cited in Stanek, 2011, p. 130). This theory also helps us understand the added layer of complexity to the manifestation of social space in question and remains an essential cultural analytical framework in conceptualizing Universal Design.

3.3 Disability and *différance*

Returning to the discussion of categories and dichotomy, in this sub-section in particular, the meaning to what universal design epitomizes. From the discussion from Iwarsson et Ståhl (2003) on what discerns universal design from accessible design is that accessible design has not put the equality agenda further to *equitable* access for everyone.

In my understanding, the proposition is still a bit too strong as to state that accessible design conforms to the existing status quo by not challenging the norm further under the parameters to the implicit ideas this design principle subscribes to.

However, there has been research that propounds that Universal Design is in and of itself a more inclusive model (as it challenges the existing social norms further on how disability and, rudimentarily, how differences are perceived. More specifically, how *différance*, a theory developed by Jacques Derrida, could be used to illustrate the development of critical disability studies in conjunction with Foucault's idea on normality.

➤ Understanding *différance*

According to Derrida, *différance* is a concept that is to signify the interplay between binary opposites, which exhibits both elements of spatial and temporal *difference* (Derrida, as cited in Persson et al., 2014, p. 18). Relating to the spatial terms of the concept of *différance*, meaning that an idea or concept, i.e., the signified, is often represented by a sign, always in relation to and 'never exists in itself as an entity independent of other (entities), such that the meaning of what is exhibited by the sign is constantly re-defining and being redefined in different and ongoing discourse (Persson et al., 2014, p. 18). It also relates to the temporal element of the concept. What the sign represents could also be historically and culturally speaking, based on the epoque and how society evolves into its ideal in the quest.

➤ *Différance* in perceiving *normality*

With the ongoing and growing awareness from people onto developing democratic values and their embodiments such as inclusive, equal, and equitable access into the society on varying levels, the way people perceive and frame disability also changes according to the ideals upheld during their time.

In what way does Derrida's concept of *différance* relate to Foucault's notion of normality? In theory, the idea of normality could also only be grasped and understood through its opposite, and that is abnormality (Foucault, as cited in Persson et al., 2014, p. 16). In a similar fashion, Foucault illustrates what distinguishes what is conventionally normal through examples in the discourse of prison and punishment, with the application of the concept of normality expands into the critical discussion in other discourse. As Foucault contends, normality is not a perceived notion that is 'out there' waiting to be found. Instead, it is a combination of accumulated information generated during the time (Foucault, as cited in Persson et al., 2014, p. 16), as I might add, perspectives and perceived ideas (and ideals) of how a person should encompass that might arise through discourse.

By defining what 'abnormal' is, society maintains order and discipline through discerning what is normal and abnormal by putting a dichotomized set of attributes and/or behaviors, while seeing one out of the two notions as the default and the 'non-deviating' one. Also explained in Persson et al. (2014), a 'binary logic' refers to the 'structure' which stands in opposite pairs such that one term is recognized as the 'original essence' (Derrida, as cited in Persson et al., 2014, p. 16), while the other is the one that deviates. Together they evince a contrasting set of characteristics and features which might contradict what is signified by these two terms.

3.4 The '*binary logic*' and the default category

The 'binary logic' has been referenced and used to explain the binary and often dichotomized to the article by Persson et al. (2014) examining the different design principles and their implications and origins from a philosophical and methodological approach. Understanding how humans tend to perceive and conceive abstract order could be better understood through Mary Douglas's idea on 'dirt' developed in her work 'Purity and Danger', first published in 1966, which explores the concepts of pollution and taboo.

To Douglas (1966), she illustrates in her work how the idea of 'dirt' could be interpreted and understood as 'matter out of place' (p. 36). Under this concept, 'dirt' necessitates two conditions, which involves a condition that one set of 'ordered relations', and the other 'a contravention' to that order (Douglas, 1966, p. 36). As she explains,

‘Dirt then, is never a unique, isolated event. Where there is dirt there is system. Dirt is the by-product of a systematic ordering and classification of matter, in so far as ordering involves rejecting inappropriate elements. This idea of dirt takes us straight into the field of symbolism and promises a link-up with more obviously symbolic systems of purity.’

(Douglas, 1966, pp. 36-37).

➤ Implications of *the dirt*

The theory on dirt and how it exemplifies through itself, the notion of order and disorder, has also been widely accepted and used as a source of theoretical standings in architectural and urban studies (Campkin, 2013, p. 50). Through a system of belief on classification influence and presuppose exclusion to material objects and even affective bodies which deviate from the ‘ordered’ category, this, in and of itself, reflects a cultural and spatial practice to how people perceive order and the matter of belonging. It in turn, affects how one conceive space, and the material culture that surrounds, defines and negotiates space.

This theory could be seen as the theoretical base to the anthropological approach on understanding more theories, specifically the theory on the production of space developed by Lefebvre.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Orientating the field

In Wolcott's work *Ethnography: a way of seeing* (2008), he had referred to ethnography from when it first started as a qualitative study in which the question of 'where' the problem is that we are going to study, instead of simply looking at 'what' we are going to study (p.17). In his description of pinning the shifting focus onto a problem-based study grounded on theoretical traditions, ethnography is used to meet clients' needs (p. 21).

Among ethnographic projects, clients might reach out to ethnographers to help and solve a specific problem they encountered. In this way, *ethnography has regarded and 'awarded' the status as a research 'method in some compacity'* (p. 43). Fieldwork is seen, and by some, a means of seeing yet is not 'exclusive' only in ethnography. Wolcott (2008) proposes a difference between 'doing ethnography' and 'borrowing the ethnographic techniques' (p. 44). Ethnographic research should be differentiated from using ethnographic techniques and calling it *ethnography*.

This small remark has made me reflect on what it means to do fieldwork in an ethnographic field. This ethnographic research has been a somewhat 'serendipitous' one in which I only gained access through my work as a freelance interpreter for the career coaching and job matching company. Given that they have not previously been aware of my identity as a student in ethnography, they provided me access to gaining knowledge within the field of recruitment, the labor market in Sweden, as well as career coaching.

Undoubtedly, without being given an explicit research question from the end of the research field might seem like there has not been a 'problem' that is troubling or requires specific attention from the end of the research subject, i.e., the product and services provided by the career coaching company. However, this also gives great potential for me to explore and study the field with 'complete openness' (Glaser, cited in Tjora, 2006, p.432), which resembles more of a 'serendipity approach' (Ehn et al., 2016, p.132), a less systematic approach to doing ethnography on the field.

However, as a downside to the project, more time has been used to navigate the field and familiarise myself on the field, including what the company does, what kind of clients there are, and identifying a problem that might require further attention and analysis.

In this research, the fieldwork involves two and a half months of data collection with some coaches and participants in the company, the informants with which I have contacts, and based on the work I did online as an interpreter for the career coaches and the monolingual Cantonese-speaking participants in the program. In this study, two career coaches, three coaching participants, an accessibility advisor, and an inclusion and diversity advocate participated in the study in the form of chats and semi-structured interviews.

4.2 Mix of ethnographic methods – a 'bricolage' approach

During COVID19, interactions with my client, including my work calls as an interpreter, remained online. Therefore, in this research study, the field site has been quite a journey of data collection and research through a dustballing approach (Brichet & Hastrup, 2018, p.9). It involves gathering insights and perspectives here and there from different concerned parties besides some structured or semi-structured interviews with informants related to the field.

The traditional ethnographic techniques, such as participant observation, semi-structured and structured interviews, etc., have become more difficult during the current COVID19 pandemic. The career-coaching service on its own, which is now completely online, also makes it more difficult for me to get to know the other staff there. Even though these methods, such as participant observation, interviews, netnography, etc., remained crucial tools as ethnographic methods, my access to the company, including interactions with other coaches, has been limited, which affected the success of interviewing more coaches in the company.

One of the most beneficial methods used in this study is the casual conversations that usually happen after the interpreting calls. As I interpret between the coaches and the clients, I also engaged in 'participant observation'. What truly makes analysis possible is the follow-up phone calls after the standard interpreting phone calls.

In Kusenbach (2003), it has been mentioned that the drawbacks of interviewing or participant observation could be the difficulty to obtain from informants more 'authentic' materials. The more spontaneous nature of chats is more 'casual', and therefore, creates a more 'natural' environment and for as an ethnographer to gain access to the more 'exclusive'

knowledge which might not be discussed within the scope of both participant/non-participation observation (Labaree, 2002).

Even though participants are aware that I am also researching for my master's thesis a paper on the company's services, many of the clients' questions are somewhat more casual conversations to get to know them better. The topics mainly revolve around their personal experiences here in Sweden, including their process of learning Swedish and searching for jobs in Sweden.

Meanwhile, I also interviewed coaches and learned more about the company through their accounts. Interviews are semi-structured, and topics also touched upon personal stories of the coaches, including why and how they became a coach.

Another important ethnographic approach is autoethnography, which involves myself reflecting on my situatedness on the field as a researcher. This includes how and what I write about my own experiences during data collection (Ehn et al., 2016). Unique to the experience of interpreting between the Swedish/English-speaking coaches and the monolingual Cantonese speakers, I oscillate between conversations with the clients and the coaches. This also involves my own sense-making of both sides and analyzing how the social and material surroundings have been for the jobseekers and the coaches (Ehn et al., 2016, p. 102).

The different ethnographic methods make the account of experiences possible through more than just a 'representational perspective'. It also enables me a deeper understanding of the field and accumulated greater knowledge about the labor market in Sweden. Besides, it might not have been possible for me to obtain 'exclusive' knowledge if the research method had only been a purely 'observationalist' approach (Labaree, 2002, p.98).

4.3 Writing about the field

‘Today’s ethnographers are inclined to put themselves squarely into the pictures, substituting what Margaret Mead once described as ‘disciplined subjectivity; in lieu of the pretense of scientific objectivity’.

Wolcott, 2008, p. 146

As suggested in Bricet & Hastrup (2018), the process of ethnographic research, whereas the observation made could be ‘accidental and qualified’, without needing to necessarily ‘relate, map, or to be interpreted. And through such observation and remarks, enables the materials collected to reach a certain conclusion or developed into some *storytelling* guided through developments of the experiences realized through the other persons (Bricet & Hastrup, 2018, p.10). Nevertheless, as Wolcott (2008) pinpointed, writing our research findings on a particular field site through retelling these stories ultimately involves our task to ‘make sense of somebody else’s sense-making (p. 146).

It is also advised in Wolcott’s book on doing ethnography that during the research process, we aim towards producing work towards a ‘soft’ eticism (Wolcott, 2008, p.146). It means that we will need to consider the discussion on a comparison of intergroup and their differences, finding our way around to accentuate a relevant discussion from our fieldwork (p. 146). This will remain a central idea to keep in mind in my writing journey about the experiences of some users in the career-coaching program.

Undoubtedly, as Wolcott (2008) further explains in his work, what he means by a ‘soft’ eticism means that the researcher’s own positioning in the research and what they decide to emphasize in their work involves how and to what extent they ‘exercise discretion in playing some elements up or down within their work (p. 146). Without question, the ethnographic process of understanding a certain field and the analysis made are still the product that comprises a particular situated knowledge formed on behalf of the researcher. This proves that ‘at best, ethnography can only be partial (Agar, as cited in Wolcott, p. 78).

Using the term ‘partial perspective’ advocated by Haraway (1988), as there is essentially no ‘objective vision’, we as ethnographers/ researchers could only get close to

‘objectivity’ through making meanings and situated knowledge through a partial perspective (p. 583).

4.4 Emic or etic approach – a bit of both?

In the chapter ‘Ethnography from Inside Out’, Wolcott (2008) discusses what distinguishes an emic approach to ethnography and an etic approach to ethnology (p. 142). According to his explanation, an ‘emic’ approach calls for attention to salient and essential differences within a particular cultural group or community. In contrast, an ‘etic’ approach refers to the differences social scientists make for intergroup comparisons (p. 142).

As the rigidity around solely an ‘etic’ or ‘emic’ approach subsides with time, ethnographic research often comprises a bit of both and for the researchers to decide on their own what kind of similarities or differences to emphasize (p. 142).

The switch from an emic/etic approach served as the crucial base both as an ethnographic method and process of research in this study. It means that I am to switch from looking at how a so-called ‘insider’ navigate on the field, learn about the implicit rules in the labor market, to one that alternates to an ‘outsider’ approach to see who the excluded users are in specific circumstances (Wolcott, 2008, pp. 143 – 144). Therefore, the thesis aims to employ both the ethnographic approaches as an ‘etic’ and ‘emic’ one to be the ‘methods’ of this thesis, which will guide the analysis of the collected ethnographic data.

4.5 What 'lost in translation' makes possible

During my work as an interpreter, what caught my attention is when literal translations are not always possible when my clients use idioms or interjections to convey their feelings and emotions. At times, translation of dialogues also does not make it possible to convey one's character and personality between the two parties unless an interpreter really tries to make this particular element known and salient to both sides who need an interpreter to help them communicate.

As Pattison (2000) explained, the study of emotions has been historically undermined by scholars as the emotions have been often considered 'rationally difficult' to assess and evaluate (p. 21). Some philosophers would try to downplay emotions by leaving them out of the discussion altogether (Lindholm, as cited in Pattison, 2000).

However, as Pattison (2000) later disputes in his work, he tries to justify studying emotions and rebut how emotions are often perceived as a symbol of irrationality. Using sources from James (1981) and Plutchik (1994), he clarifies how the perception of emotion is a motor reaction and could be referred to as a feedback mechanism felt by individuals to the subject in question (p. 27). He then also quotes from Lazarus and Lazarus (1994) that emotions are, in and of itself, 'the products of personal meaning' (Pattison, 2000, p. 28), reaffirming that emotions follow a logic of their own.

As he quotes from Lazarus and Lazarus (1994), 'emotions are complex reactions that engage both our minds and our bodies. These reactions include a subjective mental state, such as a feeling of anger, anxiety, or love; an impulse to act, such as fleeing or attacking, whether or not it is expressed overtly; and profound changes in the body, such as increased heart rate or blood pressure. Some of these bodily changes prepare for and sustain coping actions, and others ... communicate to others what we are feeling, or want others to believe that we are feeling (p. 28).'

Identifying the instances when the certain conveying of 'emotion' has been somehow 'lost' during translation might help me achieve the aim of finding out if the career-coaching service manifests a certain kind of emotions for perhaps some of its participants. This would become part of my 'method' as well to answer the research question concerning emotions. More specifically, the specific kind of emotion which the parties might have felt but might not always be revealed or become known by the other party.

Maximizing Positive User Experience at a career-coaching program -
A focus on the perspective of Universal Design

In this thesis, I will try to demonstrate in my findings the role of emotions in understanding and improving the career coaching program's services and primarily look for specific linkage between a Universal Design approach and the establishment of positive emotional experience.

Chapter 5: Analysis - Understanding the Field

5.1 Pre-conditions to coaching and job-matching

In the first two sections in this chapter, I will discuss in greater detail how career coaching is carried out, starting with the discussion on participation and pre-conditions to enrolment in the program.

Before any discussion about Universal Design on the chosen field could be made possible, context is crucial. As explained in Steinfeld & Maisel (2012) and the National Disability Authority, (n.d.), Universal Design is identified as the ‘process’ to create usable products or services to a wide range of (dis)abilities and other characteristics without ‘special’ adaptation as much as possible. Since Universal Design is a ‘process’, inclusion/exclusion and the group(s) of targeted users only reveal themselves to the outside world after the service has been launched. Therefore, the study of the field is crucial to identify a potential ‘problem’. The problem may exist in the career-coaching service and impedes the experience of some users, even if such circumstances might not appear to be a ‘problem’ of sorts in the eye of the company.

During an interview with an informant who works as a coach, it was explained that the career-coaching service is offered to job seekers who are registered under Arbetsförmedlingen (in English: the Swedish Public Employment Service). According to the company's official website¹, interested persons registered at the Arbetsförmedlingen could contact the administrator and ask to be put in the program. This information is confirmed when I talked to one of the participants in the program and found out how she arrived at the career-coaching program in the first place (Fieldnote, 2021). The participants will be registered under the program for three months, with the possibility of an extension for another three months.

Given the current situation during the pandemic, the originally in-person workshops and personal meetings between participants and coaches have been switched to online Microsoft Team Meetings and a weekly telephone call with the coaches. As a requirement, the program's participants will have to attend two workshops every week, and attendance will be taken by the end of the workshop (Observation, 2021). Each week, an

¹ For the sake of anonymity, the original source will not be disclosed.

assigned coach will call them via phone and discuss their progress on jobhunting or help them make contacts on scheduling interviews with potential employers and working with them on building their CVs (Observation, 2021).

According to the information provided on the website of the career-coaching company, their primary goal is to assist unemployed people in Sweden to find jobs given their previous work ‘experiences, conditions and needs’ (erfarenheter, förutsättningar och behov). For the sake of anonymity, once again, the original source will not be disclosed. The company provides preparatory training, motivational activities, as well as individual guidance to job seekers. From the details elicited on the company’s website, another objective of their work is to help their participants get the ‘right conditions’ to establish themselves in the society and therefore create a stable living condition’.

However, what does getting the ‘right conditions’ mean? What does it necessitate the kind of skills job seekers should have? Meanwhile, what kind of structure and narrative do the company and its service fit into the labor market situation in Sweden?

Under other sections of the career-coaching company, there has not been explicit mention of highlighting the kind of ‘skills’ and/or ‘conditions’ one should have to be considered eligible for a particular role. Understandably, different positions at different companies will have their own specific sets of requirements for job candidates.

From the autoethnographic data and personal interviews with coaches, I realized that the ‘conditions’ are, at times, quite abstract and implicit. The conditions are often specific to one’s Swedish language proficiency and educational background (Autoethnography, 2021; Interview with coach S and L). For instance, if they have a foreign background and are later-in-life immigrants, the question also lies in whether their education and discipline are transferable from their host country to Sweden and their age. Autoethnography, 2021; Interview with coach S, 2021)

Also, as explicitly written under the section ‘Vad krävs för att du ska behålla din ersättning’ (In English: What is required to receive compensation from the unemployment insurance fund’) on the webpage of Arbetsförmedlingen, job seekers are reminded that once they sign up to receive money, i.e., the compensation from a-kassa, they might need to broaden

their application, both in terms of occupations and the region or area one intends to work in ('Unemployment benefit' or 'Ersättning från a-kassa'), Arbetsförmedlingen, 2021).

Other than being 'flexible', the job seekers also need to be willing to switch to a different job when reality presents them with another opportunity or a different career path. Further complexity entered the picture when it is not always the case that job seekers voluntarily participate in these sorts of career-coaching programs.

5.2 Is participation in the program always voluntary?

During data collection, I noticed that one of the participants have been very attentive to when the next weekly workshop will be every week. He would check with the coaches each time to make sure invitation links have been sent to his email address (Observation, 2021). During the period, I helped him participate in a workshop in English and then verbally recapped the key contents to him after each seminar. I noticed how he was always on time to attend these workshops and stayed until the end of each of them (Autoethnography, 2021).

In a conventional setting, the last remark from the observation above should not come off as a surprise since this is a rather basic requirement to the participants and what one should consider an essential part of participation, i.e., their attendance and punctuality.

However, with the client being monolingual and being proficient only in his mother tongue Cantonese, I was particularly interested in what he thought of the workshops, which are only conducted in Swedish or English, and how he felt for the struggle he faced with being monolingual while participating in the program. However, when he answered, he had skipped explaining to me what he felt about the workshops. Instead, he informed me that attendance at the workshops is compulsory for him to get the subsidy during unemployment (Fieldnote, 2021).

Piecing the information received from a coach (Interview, 2021) and the official website of Arbetsförmedlingen, unemployed persons could receive compensation from a-kassa (in English: Unemployment Insurance Fund) provided that they have satisfactory participation in the career-coaching program. According to a chat with a client, he explained that he was put on the career-coaching program after one year of unemployment. This aligns with the

requirements elicited on the webpage of Arbetsförmedlingen, that participation is compulsory to the referral and participation to a labor market policy program ('Warning or suspension from unemployment insurance fund', Arbetsförmedlingen, 2021).

This account reveals the complexity of the career-coaching program. Using Mauss' theory of the gift, the career-coaching service could be interpreted as a 'gift' that is given to receivers which entail in its own term and subtleness, the necessity to 'accept' the gift by reciprocating the gesture of welfare and repay their 'gift-debt' through the compulsory and active participation in the career-coaching program (Mauss, 1990).

On the one hand, the program could be understood as a public service, which ensures that unemployed persons receive some level of interventions from the Swedish government to ensure their job-searching progress. Meanwhile, it is also a counter-tool for the government to exercise their power on the unemployed persons as part of the welfare and compensation scheme to prevent exploitation from the unemployed persons. There it seems, the career-coaching program is more of a hybrid product both as a monitoring tool from the discourse of governmentality, as well as a form of welfare by giving one-on-one guidance and support to individuals from a Swedish coach.

Unavoidably, this adds to the layered meanings that are now added to the career-coaching program's functions. In itself, the coaching experience is not often voluntary, and it also implies rigid conditions and requirements attached to the guidance-oriented coaching service.

In fact, under Mauss's theory and exemplification on 'gift' (1990), obligations as recipients to receive and reciprocate are usually subtle, as it is used to illustrate social relations and bond-building between givers and recipients. Here I suggest that through writing the conditions of the participation in the career-coaching program and subsequently, successful obtainment of the compensation from a-kassa (seen as the object that is the 'gift'), the government is also communicating more explicitly their expectations from the expected conduct of an unemployed Swedish citizen.

In this way, the career-coaching program could be understood as a system itself to maintain order. Douglas' explanation of the 'dirt' reveals who and what qualities are considered 'normal' and expected in this context. It organizes what a citizen should and should

not do based on the representation of ‘conditions’ they fit in as an ‘eligible’ recipient of compensation.

5.3 The participants: Intersecting identities and their ‘restrictedness’

➤ *Being ‘older’ and less ‘digitally’ competent*

In theory, the participants in the program could be anyone registered under Arbetsförmedlingen who chooses to sign up for career coaching, be it ‘voluntary’ based on their own interest in the program, or part of their obligation for continuing to receive compensation from Arbetsförmedlingen during their unemployment (Chat with Participant L., 2021; Arbetsförmedlingen, 2021), as discussed in section 5.2.

When I first started my work as an interpreter and researcher, the more ‘open’ serendipity approach takes a long time for me to familiarize myself on the field. Unlike the previous student consultancy projects we did before in this master’s program, I have not been handed a specific ‘problem’ identified by the client or us as researchers and collecting empirical data and examples to help guide our analysis. As I started using Universal Design as a perspective to analyze the company and the participants, I saw a connection between one of the theoretical roots of Universal Design in Derrida’s idea: *différance*. More specifically, ‘*difference*’, which cultural anthropologist Bradd Shore emphasized as the ‘matter’ at the heart of all anthropology (Wolcott, 2008, p. 379).

Using the concept of ‘*différance*’ by Derrida, accumulated information about this particular group of participants begin to emerge with and through looking at what and where the *opposites* lie; for instance, these informants are monolingual, compared with the two languages (Swedish and English) in which the weekly workshops are available in. Meanwhile, these informants are also comparatively older, and coincidentally, most participants I interpreted for only own a mobile phone but not a personal computer (Observation, 2021). This could be seen as a contrast with the now entirely ‘online’ career-coaching service with its weekly online workshops and audio/video- conferencing between coaches and participants.

During some weekly calls as I interpreted for my clients, I also found out that most of them do not own a personal computer. This seems to correlate with some of the difficulties they encountered during the program. Examples include logging on to their online

account to participate in the workshops, to know how it is to wait ‘in the lobby’ of the meeting rooms and to be admitted in the workshops, as well as preparing for their own CVs online using an automated program (Autoethnography, 2021).

The above examples could be understood in relation to what is presumed to be the ‘default’ characters exhibited by participants. For example, participants should be able to speak English or Swedish and know how to use digital tools and gadgets. Even though the requirement to use digital tools is somewhat specific to the covid-19 pandemic, the requirement on language proficiency in either ‘English’ or ‘Swedish’ is seen as quite fundamental for basic access to the program. These monolingual citizens become somewhat the ‘othered’ or ‘norm-deviated’ bodies in the program.

When put in Mary Douglas’s idea of ‘matter-out-of-place’, they become the ‘dirt’ that does not fit into the ‘default’ or ‘desired’ category during their time under the career-coaching program with special assistance needs to navigate through the service.

During interviews and chats with several participants, I learned that these few monolingual citizens have lived in Sweden for more than eight years. For most of the participants I have talked to, shortly after they arrived in Sweden, they did some basic language training at SFI (In full: Swedish for Immigrants). However, it seems the efforts to continue studying Swedish have not been sustained after they found a job that might not require much ‘active’ Swedish language skills, i.e., spoken and written Swedish.

These participants mostly worked in a relatively isolated environment and did not need much social interaction as part of their work (Chat with Participant L., Interview with Participant E.). He also cited that he has been swamped while working as a chef in a restaurant, and he did not have the time to go to Swedish classes after work (Chat with Participant L.).

➤ *Language: the deciding factor?*

Continuing Swedish language training has been a rather personal choice. Not every participant in the program I have spoken to and interviewed said that they continued to have Swedish language classes after they found work here. Understandably, once they found a job, their attention might be shifted towards purely their craft or work, instead of improving their Swedish language ability, which might not remain a prime focus anymore based on the nature of their work.

One previous participant has continued to study Swedish on the weekends while working part-time in a Chinese restaurant. She reaffirmed that language remains the most pivotal ‘obstacle’ for her as an immigrant. The following excerpts from the interview have been translated from Mandarin Chinese to English. As the interview is conducted in Mandarin Chinese, special attention has been paid to translate as literally as possible to the English equivalent, instead of over-interpreting through the contents and potentially alters the speaker’s intent and delivery of meaning. As she explained in an interview her personal experience while searching for work here,

‘I am now 48 years old, when I came over I was 38 (laughs). (...) It takes me seven years eventually, to find an ‘official’ job here (I am inferring here that the interviewee means that she finally received an official full-time contract). (,,) I just wanted to say, someone like me, an immigrant, ... I am not very adequate regarding my language ability – It’s very difficult for me to find a job, it’s very very difficult. Just like some of my friends here, similar to my age, it also took them six to seven years to finally be able to find an official job, so it’s really difficult.’

(Interview with Participant E., 11 March, 2021)

Other than taking on average six to seven years to find a more long-term job with more stability, this interviewee further explained her job experiences before participating in the career-coaching program:

‘When I first started working at the Chinese restaurant, I was doing a job that is paid hourly. When I started working, I only get paid 50 sek an hour. (...) Because my language ability (in Swedish) is not good, I could not do the catering nature of work – so I could only stayed inside the kitchen to work, washing the dishes, preparing the ingredients and chopping vegetables, for example. Because I didn’t have any prior work experience here, I got really low pay. Then I continued studying (Swedish) alongside working, eventually I gradually got better with my Swedish compared to when I first got here, so I could start doing basic catering (as a server) – this is when my salary started to change. I was able to earn 80 sek an hour. And eventually, I managed to earn 100 sek an hour.’

(Interview with Participant E., 11 March, 2021)

From the account above, it does seem to demonstrate that Swedish language command is a determining factor to whether these immigrants could earn a better salary and thus, obtain more significant cultural capital and leads to more opportunities at work. This could correspond to what the career-coaching company categorizes as 'stable income', or by and large, a close interpretation of what has been put forward by the company and the descriptions on its website.

➤ *Adapting to the changing 'field'*

Bourdieu wrote about the 'field' and 'habitus' alongside his theories on the forms of capitals (1986). 'Habitus' is 'a socialized and structured' body that constructs a context-dependent, relative, and thus, 'embodied' social reality that is subjective to the environment a particular individual is in (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 101). According to Bourdieu, the 'field' is also where contests and potentially accumulates one's 'habitus', which could be understood as a particular environment prompting for change, and movement when the contested 'habitus' encounters a 'field' with which one is not familiar with (Reay, 2004, p. 436).

This explains the previous participant's strategy in identifying her 'weakness', i.e., her language ability in Swedish, which is vital to her gaining further agency later on. Her response to aspiring a 'career' right after she moved to Sweden explains her experience coping with the changing 'field' – moving from China to Sweden and getting used to a different social and cultural environment.

'When I first got here, the ambition of having a 'career' seems too 'big' and 'out-of-reach', I think the most important aspect is to solve the basic issue of 'surviving'. And I can't rely on my husband with everything here, so I started looking for jobs here while I was studying at SFI. And through friends of friends, I found this job at a Chinese restaurant. So, gradually, living has not been that difficult... and I started my family here after three to four years I am here. My income is more stable, and my family life is harmonious happy, this is what I pursue.'

(Interview with Participant E., 11 March, 2021)

Though not explicitly clear in the descriptions above, Participant E., a previous participant, has ‘adapted’ herself and her notions of happiness and ‘goals’ in Sweden as she was adapting to the ‘field’ in Sweden. The importance of a stable ‘income’, and how the different connections she made through official and unofficial channels, such as her friend circles, contributed to what she called ‘surviving’ in Sweden.

The discussion above focuses primarily on the participants and their adaptive strategies getting used to the new field being Sweden. The environment might be hugely culturally different compared to where these now Swedish nationals were originally from. Other than mainly their Swedish language command and digital competence, it also seems that one of the most crucial factors immobilizing them in successful job-searching is the breadth of their network or the lack of.

5.4 The coaches: the complexity of ‘sharing networks’ ... or not

During an interview with a coach, she has explained at one point the difficulties she encountered while helping these unemployed jobseekers,

‘The problem is, in Hässleholm, there’s something called ... *(due to issue of ethics, the author decided not to disclose the name of the organization here)*, like it is connected to Arbetsförmedlingen, and they have a lot of contacts with companies like ... *(due to issue of ethics again, the author decided not to disclose the name of the company the informant mentioned here)*, like to have an internship. And the problem is they have the contacts, or a bit of ‘easier’ jobs which you could practice to work in Sweden. For me, it is really hard for me to get her *(inferring: the jobseeker)* out of the company and do a good job, because we don’t have the contact with these companies. I have tried to contact them, and I also tried contacting other companies. But it is really hard to get to them because you really have to have a connection to them. But we don’t. So, it is really hard for me to help her, I think it is so sad because she really wants to work, I think that she would do a great job. Because we don’t have the right connection here.’

(Interview with coach L, Mar 8, 2021)

Maximizing Positive User Experience at a career-coaching program -
A focus on the perspective of Universal Design

From the explanation above, we could understand that one essential part of the career-coaching program is, on one hand, the sharing of connections from a Swedish company to help these unemployed jobseekers to find work. However, as explained, there have also been ways to go around the law. Job seekers might move from internship and internship, perhaps within the same company but perhaps in a different department. However, they might be denied a further full-time contract as their internship is not ‘renewed’ or ‘promoted’ into a full-time position afterward.

Moreover, as there are types of works that are ‘easier’ to do, such as more repetitive and usually less knowledge-based jobs, workers are more replaceable. They are often struggling to keep their job based on their educational background or other sorts of more knowledge-based skills.

This reveals that even as a ‘solution’ of helping job seekers and thus implementing a career-coaching program, the networks within the existing members or staff inside the company are essential. When this piece of knowledge is placed in the juxtaposition of another set of information from another coach, it reveals the complexity of ‘network-sharing or open and/or closed networks in the Swedish labor market.

‘It takes very strong networks, for instance, in the journalism industry is really strong nepotism. Yeah, yeah. Maybe there are other fields as well, but journalism is the strongest one of those. You basically have to be a relative to a person already working there. You get the chance to get in. I have several friends that had and clients that I study journalism and that they have failed to get into those well sought-after positions. They stayed for three years and they get thrown out because of the ‘lower requirements’ - Say that you cannot have a temporary job indefinitely. (You) then after a while, they will have to either give you a permanent position or throw you out... and then they throw you out because it's very difficult in the Swedish law to get rid of a person once that they are employed. You cannot replace that with a different one unless that person really leaves. So it's the labour law, which not only that you can stay at, the last employed is the first that has to leave.’

(Interview with coach S, Mar 4, 2021)

5.5 Intersecting disadvantages

Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term ‘intersectionality’ in 1991 to refer to a specific form of inequality emerging from the intersecting social categories one is in. This means that one’s ethnic background could intersect with the disadvantage of belonging to one’s gender. She uses examples from the systematic discrimination and inequality faced by black women and how both these social categories go together and form a specific kind of disadvantage in society (Crenshaw, 2007).

Some people disagree with the concept of ‘intersectionality’ as some contend that this encourages a ‘victim’ narrative. However, such a claim would be missing the point and turning a blind eye to the systematic disadvantage one might face if they belong to a few specific social categories. When combined, they could create graver disadvantaged situations compared to their counterparts, whereas such categories do not apply to them.

As ‘intersectionality’ evolves as both a concept and a methodology to understanding social inequalities, the terminology has moved far beyond the scope of merely under gender studies to highlight a perspective to seeing disadvantaged groups in society. The data in this thesis demonstrate that a particular group of citizens, despite access to the program, deviate from the ‘norm’ and only partially benefitted the program.

Other than being the ‘different’ group of users who constantly require additional assistive support within the scope of the career-coaching program, such as having an interpreter and not participating fully in the weekly educational workshops. In a broader sense, they are a group of people who lack a substantial network in Sweden, where labor networks are more closed off.

These intersecting inequalities have put them at a crossroad yet again with another ‘disadvantaged’ juncture, being a group that was left unprotected in the face of other labor protection laws (Interview with coach S).

Chapter 6: Analysis - Applying Universal Design

In the previous section, the context of and the structure of how the career-coaching program fits into Sweden's overarching labor market is attempted with insights from different informants. Discussing some of the struggles that participants face exemplifies how within the labor. On the one hand, it is a company that aims to foster the integration of different job seekers who are currently unemployed back to the labor market. While at the same time, it is still conforming to and reproducing a structure in which some participants continue to be the 'immobilized' body.

This section will elaborate on the perspective added to how Universal Design frames the participants and the career-coaching services, seeking within its principles ways to maximize positive user experience.

6.1 'Users' first and foremost

Using the perspective of Universal Design, individuals are, first and foremost, considered 'users' who are interacting with the immediate physical and/or social environment they are in. This theoretical underpinning, which might be regarded as 'idealistic' by some, challenges the status quo on how dominant groups are often prioritized and remained as the 'mainstream' type of users amongst other user groups. However, failing to recognize the varied human conditions and capabilities results in neglecting the conditions of other user groups. This indirectly shapes the way others perceive 'normality'. In the planning stage, the needs of some user groups might not be considered. They become excluded from the design artifacts and, in most cases, remain excluded as they are not seen as just the same as other users.

Indicated by Hansson (2006), Universal Design ultimately challenges people to see groups like 'the disabled' or 'the elderly' in a more 'realistic' view. It reinforces that they are not framed as 'the helpless victims' because of how the designs place constraints and inconvenience on them (p. 127).

This particular ethnographic study on a career-coaching program also presents us with a realistic 'problem' that counteracts Universal Design. Such difficulty could be attributed to the milieu the existing 'field site' is in and how it is intertwined with existing political or social structures. Consequently, the process towards attaining the goal of an 'inclusive' environment remains uneasy and complicated.

Take the experience of the monolingual-speaking immigrants in this program as an example. Their identity as ‘outsiders’ within the limited time they were in the coaching program is quite evident to me as an insider-outsider (Autoethnography, 2021). Often time, their limited language skills hinder them from developing better communication with the coaches. This includes indirectly communicating their personality to the coaches and being persuasive when asking directly for the coaches’ help with the field of work they wish to look for (Observation, 2021). This incident reminds me of how on the webpage of Arbetsförmedlingen, one of the conditions is that job seekers are reminded of the possibility of needing to ‘broaden their application’ when necessary, considering the area they would like to work in, as well as occupations (Ersättning från a-kassa, Arbetsförmedlingen, 2021). However, this poses a question on the kind of options these types of citizens might have. For instance, having a ‘coach’ to choose between trying to take them and placing them in contact with companies that interest them or simply finding them an available job as soon as possible.

6.2 The Education Workshops

The career-coaching program primarily consists of two core segments: the weekly educational workshop and a weekly phone call with job-seeking participants. They become the primary ‘meeting places’ for the participants and coaches. However, there is some rudimentary ‘inapplicability’ when it comes to the weekly phone calls. Having an interpreter, in this case, could be considered necessary for smoother and more effective communication between the coaches and the participants. Meanwhile, as far as communicating ‘emotions’ as part of the call, an interpreter also needs to identify the instance the interpreter could make within their capability. For example, this could involve delivering a sentiment felt by the participants, but not possible for the participants to directly convey such emotions to the coaches.

Given that these weekly education workshops are only available in two languages, i.e., Swedish and English. Through participant observation and autoethnography methods, I have noticed that these workshops require a high level of language command in the respective workshops for active participation in the workshops. Merely through ‘participating’ in the workshops will involve users following through the contents shown during the workshops, which could sometimes be overly ‘informative’ and ‘wordy’ (Autoethnography; Participant Observation, 2021). However, in my regard, for active participation in the workshops, I would

be understanding when the coaches are posing questions in the workshop, and in a timely manner, respond online through typing in the chats (Autoethnography; Participant Observation, 2021).

Using the seven principles outlined under the framework of Universal Design, when put in context in this case, the element of ‘flexibility in use’ is present yet restrictive. Understandably, since the usual population in Sweden is bilingual in English and Swedish, or at least proficient in their native language Swedish, the medium of instructions for the workshops being in these two languages are indisputable.

When the ‘seven principles are considered in terms of how they bring forth specific design goals, such as ‘cultural appropriateness’ and ‘social integration’ (Steinfeld & Maisel, 2012), this also presents the career-coaching program an opportunity to recognize an area of improvement. For instance, this could mean a step further to evaluate the varied language ability and language(s) spoken by their citizens, who might be native to the languages of neither Swedish nor English.

As mentioned under the theoretical framework in this thesis, the notion of ‘normalized’ bodies has been brought up concerning Derrida’s idea of différance. The participation of these monolingual participants is merely symbolic, meaning that they are placed in the workshop to be unified to be provided an ‘equal’ setting for education. Yet, their abnormality to digest the information provided in the workshops is reflected through how the other ‘mainstream’ participants have no problems encountered which impede their (active) participation. This ‘abnormality’ of some participants has been recognized yet disregarded as no active solution has been sought to improve their experience, which could be attributed to how ‘financially’ costly for adaptations or more assistive support.

The issue language imposes on some participants' experiences relates to two other principles under Universal Design – equitable use and perceptible information. As pinpointed in a diagram in Steinfeld & Maisel (2012)’s book on Universal Design: Creating Inclusive Environment, equitable use catalyzes attaining some design goals, namely personalization, social integration, cultural appropriateness, understanding, and awareness.

However, as part of my observation while participating in the education workshops, the language used on online job-searching platforms is usually in Swedish. Even

when coaches provide participants a step-by-step guide on navigating through the website, they sometimes recommend participants using online translate applications, such as Google Translate. Yet, the coach reminded participants that ‘sadly, not all information is translated’ (Autoethnography; Participant Observation, 2021). Besides, most information in the workshops is entirely textual without visual aids, unless the workshop concerns a step-by-step guide on demonstrating to participants how to navigate a particular online service (Autoethnography; Participant Observation, 2021).

The above description presents difficulty and limits within the career-coaching company. Since for normalized bodies, i.e., ‘typical’ Swedes who receive bilingual education in Swedish and English will most likely find information ‘perceptible’, the same level of reception might not be duplicated for an individual who has limited language skills in the respective language of command in the workshop.

Recalling from a chat with a participant after I have recapped the vital contents in a workshop, I asked how he felt about the workshop. He responded using an idiom in his mother tongue Cantonese to describe the experience as ‘like a chicken talking to a duck’. This idiom essentially refers to miscommunication between two parties due to two mutually unintelligible languages. Therefore, even when he was participating in the workshops, he was not receiving the information that was supposed to be delivered.

During the research for this thesis, I have noticed how there has been an implicit inclination within the career-coaching program to reproduce the existing power dynamic between the monolingual immigrants and the governmental body helping them. More specifically, an expectation is crucial for a jobseeker to become accepted and considered ‘someone who wants the job’.

‘Yea, but the thing is, I have some people who are here for like 20 years, and they still have not learned the language. But if you get here, and you learn Swedish, and maybe you get a driver license, and maybe you read in Komvux, then I think you will have a great chance of getting a job. But like first, maybe after four years, when you try to learn Swedish, you’re good. And you have to have a good economy to get a driver’s license; then it will work. If you work hard, learn the language, then you will get a job, of course. If you have been in Sweden for 20 years and you haven’t learnt the language, then you will have a hard time to get a job. *Because I don’t think you really want the job, if you don’t learn the language.*’

(Interview with informant, Mar 11, 2021)

Through this account, even though it could not be known if other people share a similar mentality in Swedish society, it has been evident that language is seen as a signifier for knowledge and skills, and knowing the language is strongly expected. This example communicates once again that, within the job-coaching field, importance has been particularly placed on getting job seekers with foreign backgrounds, i.e., the newly arrived, to work towards speaking Swedish and integrate into the society.

6.3 Universal Design in relation to *time* and *space*

Understandably, there is no ample work that could be done regarding the communication between two mutually unintelligible languages. As shared by a coach in an interview,

'I think the important thing is that, if you get a job where they speak your language, and share your culture. I think you should take it. But the hard thing, and the most important thing, is that you don't get stuck there, that maybe you get an experience, your first job in Sweden, so that you can write it on your cv. But then it is important to like, maybe practice your language at SFI, and then like get out (of the job market). But I think like... you shouldn't say no to a job, because of the language, but it is important to not get stuck in there, I think it's easy to get stuck in a job where you speak the language and you know the culture. I don't know ... if I have a good answer, it's good to have a job as long as you don't get stuck there and you try to get to a workplace where they speak Swedish ...'

(Interview with coach L, 8 Mar 2021)

The newly arrived immigrants will often be enrolled in the free languages courses offered by SFI (Swedish for Immigrants). However, in interviews with some participants in the program, almost all of them have not continued going to SFI after they have found jobs here. One participant shared that as he was so busy at work, he didn't continue going to SFI after one to two months of beginners' training in Swedish (Chat with Jerry, n.d.). During a chat after the interpreting call, he shared that his workplace before did not require him to know Swedish, as he only needed to work in the kitchen and 'did not need to interact with any foreigners' (Chat with Jerry, n.d.).

Deducing from some of the experiences of these monolingual Cantonese-speaking Swedish citizens, almost after they have found jobs in Sweden, the intention or persistence to work on Swedish decline. More specifically, if the newfound jobs do not require them to speak Swedish or be immersed daily in the work environment which encourages them to practice the language, they remain mostly 'monolingual' in their native language. Such a scenario and perhaps lack of motivation could become a problem, as shown while interacting with the participants in this program. For instance, they become unemployed and require the help of an interpreter to communicate with their Swedish coaches or Arbetsförmedlingen.

However, as I was working as an interpreter, I also came to know that it has been quite difficult for the newly arrived immigrants to get placed at SFI and start on the course. The queue has been long, and while these citizens were in the career-coaching program, they were signed up for SFI but were still waiting.

These chains of events accentuate the importance of the education workshops within the career-coaching program. Perhaps by creating a space to encourage these citizens' exposure to a Swedish-speaking environment again, such as bringing in basic language training as part of the educational workshops. In this way, participants in the program could perhaps have greater autonomy in choosing if they would wish to participate in language training workshops other than the usual education workshops in the program.

This could provide a solution for unemployed people and are still waiting to become more fluent in Swedish and 're-enter' the Swedish labor market. Instead of merely waiting for the language courses at SFI to commence, these citizens could make better use of their time during unemployment and at the career-coaching program to continue to sharpen their language skills. This could potentially help them accumulate both social and cultural capital and their competitiveness in the labor market.

I remembered that when I first got a question from a coach when I was allowed to write a thesis on the career-coaching program, he had asked me if I could research ways to help these immigrants learn Swedish 'faster'. However, after more time I spent on the field and through communicating with different participants, what seems to be the determining factor, is the continuous and consistent exposure to an environment that requires these participants to advance their Swedish, instead of the simple 'Hej', 'Hejda' or tack så mycket' (In Swedish: Hello, Goodbye, and Thank you so much) in which they are the only words or phrases the

participants said to the coaches directly during the time I interpreted for them (Participant Observation, 2021).

Moreover, such ‘adaptation’ in the stage to ‘re-plan’ the milieu or service of the company could also bridge a somewhat institutional gap among the bureaucracy of having different departments in charge of various affairs. For instance, SFI is the program that helps newcomers to develop their Swedish skills, while Arbetsförmedlingen is the agency to help unemployed persons seek jobs. However, while waiting to be put on a specific service, some participants are in limbo for a long time before they could really access the service.

The career coaching company is a place for job seekers to get coached on what works best to achieve their career goals. Further reconsideration of the services needs to be sought to demonstrate awareness and understanding, both socially and culturally, to enable ‘personalization’ to respond to some monolingual citizens' specific needs.

By personalizing and closing the gap between the language divide, social integration could be fostered even amidst a program centered on job matching. As the design goals of Universal Design indicate, personalization, social integration, cultural appropriateness, understanding, and awareness are the primary outcomes to be achieved.

6.4 Universal Design in learning

As I researched Universal Design in learning, a set of universal design guidelines, some resemblances of this framework might improve the program, providing options for ‘interest’ . This could help optimize individual choices and autonomy and optimize ‘relevance, value, and authenticity (Centre for Applied Special Technology, 2011). It means that participants could choose from more varied themes and topics under the coaching program, which is not just chosen by the coaches and with options that might better their needs. Be it tips on finding jobs, speaking to a potential employee, or just getting help know some basic terminologies or phrases relating to their field of interest.

Since the workshops mostly repeat themselves with the same content, the most notable difference lies in the speaker, a different coach every other week. However, information remains inaccessible in the workshop to Swedish learners and/or monolingual speakers in their native language. As speakers, they could be economically disadvantaged and

queue for the free language courses under their municipality. These workshops are not offering participants other alternatives for ‘perception’ – which involves offering ways to customize the display of information, including both visual and auditory information (Centre for Applied Special Technology, 2011).

In a telephone interview with a coach, he mentioned that one of the company's goals is to successfully match almost 300,000 people all over to Sweden to a job (First interview with coach S, n.d.). Considering that there is also an ample amount of ‘newly arrived’ persons in Sweden, those who are still relatively new here but struggle to find work again after unemployment could have another (semi-) official channel to strengthen their language skills other than SFI.

In this regard, the service orientates itself from being just a program primarily responsible for ‘maintaining the order’ by encouraging unemployed persons to continue with job searching and re-enter the labor market. Universal Design's idea reminds services and products to look for the potentially ‘othered or ‘different’ bodies who might not be the mainstream users and be aware of their needs. This could help them expand the scope of their service and, in turn, accommodating further the needs of those even if they are the minority in the program.

Ultimately, this prompts more meaningful engagement between the program and the participants in the long run. This demonstrates the necessity of considering Universal Design – including the neglected persons and needs, ‘shallow’ level of participation, and their ‘place’ in the planning stage of a service or a program. Otherwise, the misalignment reflects that the product or service has only become merely a representation of a ‘ritual’ that symbolically involves these participants. Yet, with only their partial participation, the program would have minimal effects to cater to this type of participants’ needs when they are out of a job and waiting to be matched with companies and jobs again.

Chapter 7: Discussion - Place-making in the program

As mentioned in the previous chapter, some participants might be stuck in a limbo state while waiting to get the help they need. When they were in the program, they often require assistance to access the service, including needing an interpreter to communicate with the coaches and participating in the workshops with limited language and learning support.

In this section, the focus is to reflect on the principles of Universal Design through the angle of ‘placemaking’ to achieve better inclusion in the program.

Although difficult to pinpoint the absolute origin of ‘placemaking’, the term has been widely used in many different fields, such as social studies, urban and architectural studies, etc. (‘Five different early approaches to placemaking’, Relph, 2016). It also appears that the idea related to ‘placemaking’ surfaced as early as in 1979, in which Christopher Alexander, an architect, and design theorist, wrote in his book ‘The Timeless Way of Building’ the roots or the cultural reasons towards the making of a ‘place’ – where happy memories are formed (Relph, 2016). More varied meanings and interpretations of the term begins to emerge in the 80s and 90s, where the focus of ‘placemaking’ is on creating positive emotions for residents or participants, and including the exploration of what it means to create community identity (Hayden, 1988, as cited in Relph, 2016). Rudimentarily speaking, the term calls for people to reflect on the relationship between people and place and how culture, identity, and community are shaped within the unique praxis of how the lived experiences of people are embedded within spatial practices.

In this thesis, I would draw the definition delineated by what the word means to thinkers at the Project for Public Space (2007), an organization on public spaces and the building of communities. On the website of the company, placemaking is referred to as both a process and a philosophy (‘What is place-making?’, Project for Public Spaces, 2007). Centered around ‘observing, listening to, and asking questions of the people who live, work, and play in a particular space (‘What is place-making?’, Project for Public Spaces, 2007), placemaking is to understand the needs and the aspirations for those who are the users of the space, and also for the community as a whole.

The approach to ‘placemaking’ resonates a lot with the methods of ethnography, which often involves observation and interviews, etc., to collect insights. In this context,

placemaking also enters the discussion as highly relevant. In the section below, I would like to bring some novel ideas to the interpretation of ‘placemaking’ with an anthropological perspective.

7.1 Correlations between the space triad and creating positive emotional response

‘Placemaking’ resonates with Universal Design because both the concepts are guided by an emphasis on human-centric design or environment. Both ideas focus on creating positive emotional responses for their participants or community.

Since place-making and Universal Design are both ongoing processes, Lefebvre’s space triad could simply serve as a model to help companies and individuals concretize the social practices in the making. It prompts those who are in power to imagine and ‘create’ space to reflect on and become aware of the social environment they are creating.

In Steinfeld & Maisel (2012), the key design goal of Universal Design is to foster ‘positive emotional responses of individuals with their physical environment (p. 129). It consequently helps produce a ‘positive mental mapping’ associated with the physical environment in question (Steinfeld & Maisel, 2012, pp. 128 -129).

Given that today's everyday life has evolved beyond the scope of ‘physical’ everyday environment, Lefebvre’s space triad still applies and is equally applicable and relatable to online activities today. Companies would also need to consider beyond their services for its representations in the social and physical environment. For example, just as during the COVID-19 pandemic, many face-to-face modes of social interactions have been replaced online. This highlights the importance of different companies’ plans to provide an inclusive environment, both in-person and online.

More emphasis needs to be put on maximizing the outcome of producing ‘positive emotional responses’ when companies transition the services from in-person meetings to online ones. As indicated in section 6.1 in this thesis, many participants in the program are not very digitally competent, which take time for participants to learn the skills to be in the workshop, wait for the workshop to happen and how to pose questions digitally, etc. (Participant Observation, 2021).

Besides, learning Swedish might mean that they need a greater extent and level of support for immigrant backgrounds simply because it has not been their native language. Institutions and programs like Swedish for Immigrants (SFI), labor unions, as well as Arbetsförmedlingen are all channels to help these groups of job seekers with their job search. Still, assisting them in strengthening their soft skills, including their cultural and social immersion in Sweden, needs to be enhanced.

In Lefebvre's text on 'Dissolving city, planetary, metamorphosis by Lefebvre (2015), he explained the complexities of the formation of social practices, which proved precisely how difficult an 'outsider' – someone who doesn't initially share the same culture to the mainstream audience, to have to adjust. It also means that in order to help them become better integrated with the mainstream society, greater attention to the areas they struggle with most and corresponding assistive support is crucial.

"At first glance, everydayness appears quite simple. It is strongly imprinted by the repetitive. The analyst of everydayness quickly discovers its complexity and its complexity and its multiple dimensions; physiological, biological, psychic, ethical, social, aesthetic, sexual, etc. None of these dimensions is fixed once and for all, and each of them can become the object of multiple claims insofar as everyday life represents the busiest crossroads for the contradictions of social practice. (Lefebvre, 2014, p.205)."

The participants who are at the forefront of being in the dissonant group are, first and foremost, users in the program waiting to acquire the necessary skills to transition from being jobless to being employed again. The two interviews with the coaches also revealed that many participants go from internships to internships (In Swedish: praktik). Participants also struggle to be persuasive on how their former skills could prove helpful for their future jobs facing employers (Interview with coach S. and L., 2021).

Indeed, Universal Design helps to identify some problems within the career-coaching program. Using the recommended guidelines from CUD, such as 'simple and intuitive use', 'flexibility in use', 'tolerance for error', 'low physical effort' and 'perceptible information' etc., they show that they could be used as indicators to guide for room for improvement in the program.

However, the design goals the principle is working towards achieving, such as goals on ‘well-being’, and ‘social integration’ etc., receive comparatively less attention. Echoed in an interview with an accessibility advisor and researcher on Universal Design, she explained that design goals, such as ‘cultural appropriateness’, ‘understanding’ and ‘awareness’. These goals are underscored as the outcome of Universal Design, are not always known to most people (Interview with accessibility advisor, May 7, 2021).

As I agree, more research should be done on how to close the gap of achieving the design goals suggested by Universal Design to help expand the scope of Universal Design, instead of merely focusing on the guidelines led by its seven principles.

In the remaining part of this section, I would like to give a few examples to close in on the design goals of Universal Design. I will use the theories from cultural anthropologist Victor Turner’s liminality and further elicitation from Henri Lefebvre’s space triad and Stef Jansen’s anthropology of hope.

7.2 Seeing Placemaking through liminality

In Victor Turner’s work on liminality, liminal stage has been described as the ritualistic phase individuals are in when they are transitioning from one place/space to another, but not yet ‘there’ (Turner, 1969). It means that there is a destination in a sense, but liminal bodies have not successfully transitioned to the expected destination yet. Liminal personae, also referred to as ‘threshold people’ (Turner, 1969, p. 359), are the subjects in the liminal space. They are often individuals who might slip through the usual network of classifications, being in a space that is ‘betwixt and between’ positions that are governed by conventions, customs, and laws (Turner, 1969, p. 359).

Turner has also exemplified in his work *Liminality and Communitas* the status or classification system. Some examples he used are ‘transition/state’, ‘equality/inequality’, ‘no distinctions of wealth/ distinctions of wealth’, ‘Absence of status/status’, etc. (Turner, 1969, p. 366). As he continues with the list with ‘the list could be considerably lengthened if we were to widen the span of liminal situations considered’ (Turner, 1969, pp. 366-367), this demarcates the applicability of the concept of liminality, which relates to the ‘binary logic’ suggested by Mary Douglas, onto the participating subjects of this thesis.

This theory accentuates the subject's uniqueness in contrast with the somewhat socially and culturally determined expectations of individuals. For instance, being 'monolingual/bilingual or multilingual, 'digitally incompetent/digitally competent', having 'lack of obvious soft skills/ abundant soft skills', 'minimal social network/ broad social network', etc. It could be understood that the program itself cannot be understood merely as a separate entity that provides career coaching and job-matching services. The service is, in itself, a product that is also interlinked with other institutions and demonstrates a needed connectedness when job seekers move from one institution to the next while waiting to receive help from the respective institution. The participants are 'betwixt and between' searching for a job until successfully landing one (Turner, 1969, p. 365). The complex tangible steps between these two phases involve waiting back and forth from coaches and potential employees, getting help with writing a good CV, cover letter, or as simple as scheduling a meeting with coaches with the help of an interpreter (Participant Observation, 2021).

Complexity enters the picture when more individual and personal factors of different people alter the social and cultural milieu of the institution in question. Often, there are implicit social and cultural disadvantages exhibited by some participants, yet in the face of the official institutional bodies, their disadvantages are not often articulated and addressed.

Undoubtedly, noticing the at times dichotomized classifications of attributes within the cultural space means that 'special adaptations' might need to be done to address the needs. However, the notion of liminality can shed some light for better placemaking.

Within liminal space, individuals often require some level of support to help them with the transition. The identities of these 'currently unemployed jobseekers' identities are understood as a collective group, which defines them and how the institution sees them. However, the scope to consider more of the participants' cultural attributes seem to exhibit would help companies envision a better service or environment to provide a greater level of personalization for participants. Consequently, this could improve the participation and well-being of more participants and prompt positive emotional responses. It also means that participants who might be in a disadvantaged position, regardless of their lucidness, feel more understood by the institution and feel better connected with other participants in the program.

7.3 Seeing Placemaking through communicating hope

Through the empirical evidence from the participant observation in the weekly workshops, a pattern begins to emerge with the themes of the weekly workshops. For most of these workshops, the themes revolve around a rather ‘institutional’ perspective communicating to jobseekers various ways to find work, teaching job seekers how to write a good CV and cover letter, as well instructional guide on how to sign up for a particular service online (Participant Observation, 2021). As the workshops are mainly created to inform job seekers ‘new’ knowledge, the knowledge matter concerns mainly the ‘how-to’ questions from job-search, identifying one’s strengths and skills different jobs require, etc.

As mentioned in the previous section on liminality, the frustration during job-searching might not be seen as a ‘noticeable’ need or as necessary as a topic for workshops. By applying the theory of liminality and analyzing its applicability on the services, the services and potential areas for improvements could be understood.

Further eliciting the importance of ‘emotions’ and ‘lived experience’ through Lefebvre’s space triad, in which Lefebvre explained as a model that will ‘lose all its force if treated as an abstract model’ (Stanek, 2011, p. 132), it is crucial to focus on its application contextually. Lefebvre’s ideas on ‘lived space’, which focuses on the embodied experience and what is felt by participants, concretizes the everyday practice and the ‘social and cultural practice’. The pivotal reason to reveal in greater depth the ‘lived space’ – the embodied experience of coaches, participants, and even institutions and personnel related to the program, prompts everyone to reflect on the service. Yet, in particular, those who have the power to (1) imagine the intended users, the kind of services they are envisioning to offer, and (2) to actualize it.

This specific case means that to provide better services, it would be particularly resourceful if the company (or companies in other areas) research and collect insights by paying attention to the particular emotions jobseekers experience while attending the program.

However, the more ‘open’ approach to emotions, such as giving a platform for previous participants or guest speakers to talk about their personal experiences, also has its downside. During the workshops, participants might also ‘overshare’ or start using the

comment section to spread certain emotions or demonstrate their frustration (Participant Observation, 2021).

Undoubtedly, this might require the coaches' experience, efforts, and planning to guide participants. However, as discussed earlier, most workshops remain a rather 'theory-based' or official approach. As a participant, there were instances I felt like the workshops are 'dry' and were not particularly useful depending on the particular phase jobseekers are in while job hunting, their age group, as well as their area of expertise, etc. (Autuethnography, 2021).

Furthermore, as the goal of Universal Design concerns heavily on evoking 'positive emotions', the workshops in the service play a central role to the 'production of emotions' through seeing the career-coaching service as the 'environment' which interacts with the participants in the program (Scheer, 2012, p. 199). These workshops are also often repeating every other week (Participant Observation, 2021).

Through repetition and the central nature of the workshops on information- or theory-based, these repeated experiences and 'remembered feelings' could be acquired through participation in these workshops (Scheer, 2012, p. 213). This highlights the importance of the communication of 'hope' and a positive attitude during job-searching.

For instance, frustration could be common emotion which is experienced by job-searchers. Even though the company might inadvertently cover certain topics because such topics might be too personal or individualized to be discussed upon in a workshop where many job seekers attend. One consideration would be to invite a previous attendant of the program to share how they eventually manage to find a job – and how they did it. This could promote the sharing of 'positive experience' and instill a more proactive and optimistic attitude from participants and jobseekers to feel connected to other participants.

Hopefulness could be understood as an affect 'that is positively open to what the future may bring (Detecting Hope against All Odds: A Particular Humanist Formula, para. 1, Jansen, 2021). By accentuating the opposite of 'frustration', 'disappointment', 'pessimism', which is 'hope' and 'optimism', it means that the career-coaching program could work towards enticing hope. In Jansen (2021)'s article on 'the Anthropology of Hope', - 'Hope as a method of knowledge', exemplifications and explanations have been provided on how 'hope' is

exhibited or seen through the representation of another medium, such as ‘earthly objects’ like ‘profits ‘ (Hope as a Method of Knowledge, para. 2, Jansen, 2021).

In the context of the career-coaching program, ‘hope’ as the central idea to ‘reorientate’ the knowledge of these participants would be to reinforce the communication of different possibilities to jobseekers, such as the repetition of positive or successful job-searching experiences by (and through the invitations of) different guest speakers. Consequently, this could be a plausible approach to the production of ‘emotions’ on a hopeful note cultivated by the career-coaching program and communicated to its participants.

Starting with the discussion on Universal Design and its usage and meaning, this thesis tries to incorporate elements of Universal Design onto the ethnographic field of the career-coaching program. Often used as a set of guidelines on improving services and products to as many users as possible without special adaptations, this thesis demonstrates that there is much more to the principle of Universal Design. This is achieved by elaborating on the potential of using cultural theories onto seeing Universal Design and on placemaking. This includes the work of Lefebvre's space triad, Foucault's idea on normality, Derrida's understanding of *différance*, Victor Turner's liminality, as well as Douglas' idea on dirt.

Using a combination of ethnographic methods to understand the field, the first two analytical chapters focus on (1) using ethnography as both methods and discipline to understand the services of the company, the users, as well as (2) using the principles of Universal Design to look for angles to better the services.

The last chapter focuses on bettering placemaking at the career coaching company. Core to all three parts of the analysis, anthropological and cultural theories are often integrated and used to support the arguments made. The theories demonstrate their relevance to maximizing user experience today when institutions and government, disadvantaged group(s), and social service intertwine and form a complicated ethnographic scene.

As this thesis contends, the underlying principle and workings of Universal Design are resourceful towards the maximization of user experiences for companies and different services. Using Universal Design as a base for discussion helps company reorientate their services by providing a different set of framing tools to see a problem and what kind of changes need to be made.

Instead of using a reductionist approach to simplify the findings of this thesis, the thesis is to elaborate on the potential of using cultural theories with a said ethnographic field with the aids of the principle of Universal Design. It also demonstrates how different cultural theories, despite time, remained practical and helpful towards knowledge-making in ethnography and beyond.

This study and its findings could be highly relevant and applicable to business anthropology, urban and social studies, cultural and social anthropology. This helps Universal

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Design expand beyond the initial and usual exploration of Universal Design within the field of rehabilitative engineering, urban studies, and architectural studies.

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